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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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INFORMATION

March 14, 1973

noted by HAK

MEMORANDUM FOR: MR. KISSINGER
FROM: JOHN HOLDRIDGE *with for*
SUBJECT: CIA Assessment of Cambodian Situation

The CIA Station Chief in Phnom Penh has submitted an assessment of the situation in Cambodia (Tab A). The report indicates that there probably will be no dramatic developments (e.g. coup or collapse) in Cambodia for at least the next several months but that a gradual decline in government effectiveness will continue unless Sirik Matak is appointed as Vice President. The following are the highlights of this report:

-- The government has become "progressively immobilized" but there are no signs of a military coup at this time and FANK's capability remains what it was four months ago. Barring serious civil disturbances or military reverses, the regime has at least several months of continued viability; however, a slow decline in effectiveness is probable.

-- Lon Nol's mental health remains reasonably good.

-- The odds for Sirik Matak's appointment as Vice President are no better than ever. Matak's appointment would unquestionably increase government effectiveness but the President is reluctant to summarily overrule the substantial opposition to Matak within his own power base (e.g. brother Lon Non and the Socio-Republican Party).

-- Lon Non is a major cause of division within the body politic but his departure from the scene would probably lead to the alternate displacement of Lon Nol from his preeminent position.

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-- Premier Hak has been more flexible than his predecessor (Son Ngoc Thanh) but is not yet particularly strong in his job and his Cabinet is weak, notably in the economic sector. Barring significant civil disorders or military disasters, Hak probably will remain in office.

-- Discontent by teachers and students is a significant problem but is basically economic -- not political -- in origin and the two groups are not coordinating their dissident activities.

-- The overall military situation is not significantly worse than four months ago but FANK morale is somewhat lower and there is increased evidence of unwillingness to engage in combat.

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